

Both on and off the job, we ought to set high standards for safety for ourselves, our families and the communities in which we live. June is "National Safety Month," and it is an appropriate time to recall the steps we can all take to be safer in our homes, places of work and on the road.

The following statistics show the extent of injuries where we live, work and play (Report on Injuries in America, 2003, Published as part of Injury Facts®, 2004 edition):

- In 2003, there were 101,500 deaths as a result of unintentional injuries.
- There were about 27 million visits to hospital emergency departments for injuries. About 20.7 million injuries resulted in temporary or permanent disability.
- A fatal injury occurs every 5 minutes and a disabling injury occurs every 1.6 seconds.
- Wage losses, medical expenses, property damage, employer costs, fire losses and other expenses related to fatal and nonfatal unintentional injuries cost Americans an estimated \$607.7 billion in 2003. That's equal to about \$5,700 for each household on average.
- In the home there is a fatal injury every 16 minutes and a disabling injury every 4 seconds.
- The leading cause of death in the home, poisoning, took the lives of 11,200 people.
- A death caused by a motor vehicle crash occurs every 12 minutes; a disabling injury occurs every 13 seconds.

However, the National Safety Council has listed a number of recommendations for reducing injuries in addition to other helpful resources on their website: [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org).

- Strengthen safety belt laws nationwide to reduce traffic fatalities.
- Encourage companies and organizations to enact strict buckle-up policies for employees.
- Install handrails, grab bars and night-lights in homes to reduce the risk of falls.
- Keep all medicines/cleaners out of sight with child-proof latches to stop poisonings.
- Every American should learn first aid and CPR.

I have also long partnered with the National SAFE KIDS Campaign and our local chapter, SAFE KIDS Maryland, the first and only national nonprofit organization dedicated solely to the prevention of unintentional childhood injury. Information about protecting our children and ensuring that they are properly restrained when traveling in an automobile is available on their website at <http://www.safekids.org/>.

Drivers can take a step toward making sure that Maryland roads are safe roads by considering some of the key behaviors that can lead to fatal mistakes. Habits like speeding, aggressive, distracted, or tired driving and driving under the influence of alcohol were implicated in ninety percent of all automobile accidents last year. Alcohol is implicated in forty percent of all highway fatalities. MADD reports that in 2002, 320 minors and 22,695 adults were arrested for Driving Under the Influence in Maryland, and in 2001, there were 28 fatalities due to drunk driving. We must work together to help curb this saddening trend.

Marylanders have at their fingertips an excellent resource when working towards this goal. For defensive driving courses, information on first aid and CPR, and other safety resources, contact the Safety Council of Maryland, a private nonprofit group that seeks to prevent all types of accidents, and promote safety and health in Maryland. They can be reached through their web page, <http://www.safemd.org/> or by phone at (410) 298-4770.

And, for resource materials on traffic safety, aggressive driving, occupant protection, impaired driving or inattentive driving, contact the Traffic-Safety Awareness For Employers Project (T-SAFE) which is a collaboration between Maryland employers and the Maryland State Highway Administration's Highway Safety Office to reduce traffic-related injuries and fatalities across the State. They can be reached at: <http://www.netsnational.org/TSAFE/>.